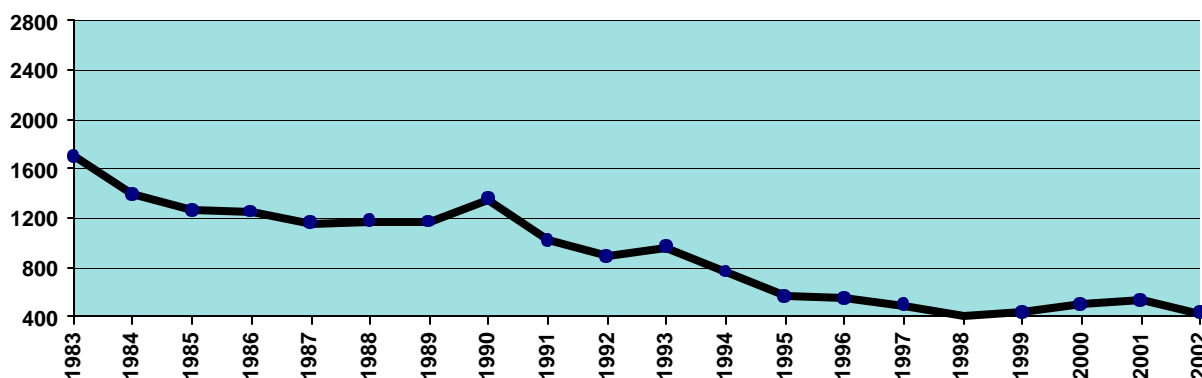


AUTO THEFT

Defined as the theft or attempted theft of a motor vehicle, this offense category includes the theft of automobiles, trucks, buses, motorcycles, motor scooters, and snowmobiles. This definition excludes the taking of a motor vehicle for temporary use by persons having lawful access.

Auto Theft in Cambridge, 1983 to 2002



526 reported in 2001 · 425 reported in 2002

Considered the most serious common larceny, auto theft has been on a steady decline in Cambridge since the mid-1970s. Statistics for auto theft are considered highly reliable, because almost all of the thefts are reported.

In 2002, Cambridge experienced 425 incidents of auto theft—an all time second lowest total for auto thefts reported in Cambridge, behind 1998. This is a dramatic decrease from the years when over 5,000 thefts were reported in the city. Although auto theft was steadily increasing from 1998-2001, the totals have managed to start declining once again. How the longevity of this crime will play out is unknown.

Auto theft is the crime where law enforcement activity has been the most influential. The decline can be attributed to the elimination of “chop shops,” interstate auto theft rings, crackdowns on insurance fraud, advances in automobile security, and new technology that enable patrol officers to quickly check a vehicle’s registry listing and determine if it is stolen.

GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN OF AUTO THEFT

AREA	2000	2001	2002	CHANGE 01-02	% OF TOTAL
East Cambridge	78	56	55	-1.7%	12.9%
M.I.T. Area	31	17	9	-47.1%	2.1%
Inman/Harrington	40	32	48	+50%	11.3%
Area 4	95	74	64	-13.5%	15.1%
Cambridgeport	64	80	56	-30%	13.2%
Mid-Cambridge	49	50	29	-44%	6.6%
Riverside	26	38	30	-21%	7.1%
Agassiz	12	13	19	+46%	4.5%
Peabody	30	40	38	-10%	8.5%
West Cambridge	20	28	18	-35.7%	4.2%
North Cambridge	36	59	45	-23.7%	10.6%
Cambridge Highlands	12	11	3	-72%	0.4%
Strawberry Hill	5	14	13	-7.1%	3.1%

This year yielded a dramatic decrease and no discernable patterns. Despite the fact there were no patterns, certain areas of the city do generate more thefts than others. The majority of the thefts occurred in the lower half of the city, concentrating in high commercial areas that attract vehicles: Galleria, Central Square, Inman Square, and Cambridge Street. As for residences, the Fresh Pond Apartments on Rindge Avenue is a hot spot for thefts as well. The top three neighborhoods for 2002 are Area 4, Cambridgeport, and East Cambridge. All three are traditionally in the top ranks, however, last year the 64% increase in North Cambridge pushed that neighborhood into the top three. Area 4 reported the most thefts in 2002, with 64 incidents – a 13.5% decrease from last year. The thefts concentrated along Bishop Allen Drive (5 stolen from the parking lot), Windsor and Harvard Streets, and Broadway. In this area, Honda Accords and Civics as well as Jeep Cherokees were most often reported stolen.

Cambridgeport's high auto theft rate can be attributed both to its high residential population and to its proximity to the MIT Area. Vassar Street's traditional hotspot did not emerge this year, however, the 600-800 block on Memorial Drive ranked as the hotspot. Magazine Street also experienced a significant amount of activity, in particular intersection areas. Most incidents occurred between 8pm and 12am on the weekends, Saturday being the most active overall. As with the city trend, Honda Accords and Civics were the most commonly stolen vehicles.

Auto thefts in East Cambridge have traditionally ranked amongst the highest due to density of businesses, including the Cambridgeside Galleria. In 2002, East Cambridge incurred a total of 55 thefts. Fifth and Sixth Street are generally hotspots for theft in this neighborhood, and the pattern continued to be such in 2002. The most frequent day of week for thefts was Friday. Similar to Cambridgeport, most incident took place between the hours of 8pm to 12am. Of the 55 incidents, only 3 took place in parking garages, and one in a parking lot. The top three cars targeted here were Acuras, Honda Civics, and Toyota Corollas.

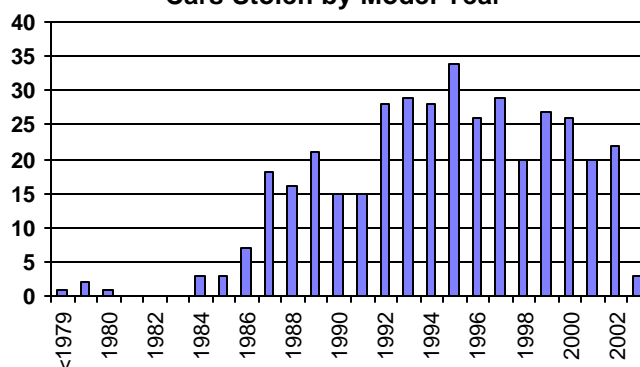
It is important to note the decreases per neighborhood this year. MIT and Cambridge Highlands reported the highest decreases in the city. MIT's 47% decrease is significant as Vassar Lane, once a major auto theft hot spot, has now simmered down, and is not a problematic area. Cambridge Highlands reported the least this year with three, a 72% decrease. This area too was once a hot spot for auto thefts in the Fresh Pond Mall area. Inman/Harrington saw an increase in this crime, as this neighborhood saw a major pattern in the larceny from motor vehicle spree during the summer. The auto thefts and larcenies from vehicles are interconnected crimes, and usually when one crime goes up, so does the other.

Top Ten Makes & Models Stolen

Makes		Models	
Honda	83	Honda Accord*+	36
Toyota	52	Honda Civic*+	36
Ford	45	Toyota Camry*+	28
Acura	33	Acura Integra+	24
Nissan	22	Toyota Corolla*+	14
Chevrolet	13	Jeep Cherokee*+	10
Jeep	12	Nissan Maxima+	9
Dodge	12	Ford Explorer+	9
Subaru	10	Mitsubishi Gallant	6
Volkswagen	8	Ford Escort	6
Mitsubishi	8		

*Also in the National Top Ten
+Also in the Massachusetts Top Ten

Cars Stolen by Model Year



Toyotas and Hondas continue to dominate the field as the most stolen vehicle. The two makes account for 32% of all stolen vehicles, a fairly consistent percentage. The most targeted model this year was the Honda Accord, followed by the Civic and Toyota Camry, the usual top three makes and models. The fact that these particular models are stolen more than any other is a function of several factors. First, these cars are some of the most commonly *owned* models in the nation, making them more widely available. Statistical probability would place them at the top of the theft list. Second, car thieves tend to look for average-cost, commonly-owned, inconspicuous cars. High-priced luxury cars are not stolen very often because they are too easy for someone to spot. Scooters have also become a more common vehicle stolen as they have become popularized in recent years. Not yet a pattern, but notable.

Analysis of theft by model year works the same way. Highest in demand are cars that are eight to nine years old. Thieves looking for transportation steal these cars because they are inconspicuous. Thieves looking to make a profit target these years because parts for

Auto Theft Recoveries

As of this report, 222, or 52 percent, of the 425 automobiles stolen in 2002 have been recovered. Fifty-one percent of the recoveries were made within a day of the original theft; 81 percent were made within four days of the theft. Boston contributed the most (83) recoveries, followed by Cambridge and Somerville.

Most recovered vehicles show damage to one of the doors and to the ignition or steering column. About half of the recovered vehicles have items missing, such as the stereo, a car phone, or other items left in the car.

The table below shows the number of vehicles stolen in Cambridge and recovered in each city or town that reported at least three recoveries.

Boston	83
East Boston	4
Allston/Brighton	1
Back Bay/Fenway	0
South Boston	1
Roxbury	5
Dorchester	17
Mattapan	3
West Roxbury/Jamaica Plain	0
Hyde Park	1
Roslindale	1
Unknown	50
Cambridge	74
East Cambridge	9
MIT Area	0
Inman/Harrington	5
Area 4	8
Cambridgeport	7
Mid-Cambridge	1
Riverside	6
Agassiz	0
Peabody	2
West Cambridge	0
North Cambridge	3
Cambridge Highlands	2
Strawberry Hill	2
Unknown	29
Arlington	5
Chelsea	5
Lawrence	6
Lowell	7
Somerville	11

Five recoveries were made out of state, including three in New York, one each in Providence and Jacksonville, Florida.

Preventing Auto Theft

These are some tips to help reduce and prevent the incidence of auto theft. (List is provided courtesy of *Auto Theft Info.com*)

- Always Take Your Keys. Never leave them in the car. Nearly 20% of all vehicles stolen had the keys in them.
- Always Lock Your Car. Approximately 50% of all vehicles stolen were left unlocked.
- Never Hide A Second Set of Keys In Your Car. Extra keys can easily be found if a car thief takes time to look.
- Park in Well-lighted Areas. Over half of all vehicle thefts occur at night.
- Park in Attended Lots. Auto thieves do not like witnesses and prefer unattended parking lots.
- If you Park in an attended lot, leave only the ignition/door key. If your trunk and glovebox use the same key as the door, have one of them changed. don't give the attendant easy access to your glovebox and trunk. Upon returning, check the tires, spare and battery to insure they are the same as those you had when you parked.
- Never leave your car running, even if you will only be gone for a minute. Vehicles are commonly stolen at convenience stores, gas stations, ATM's, etc. Many vehicles are also stolen on cold mornings when the owner leaves the vehicle running to warm up. Leaving your key in an unattended motor vehicle is a crime in some states.
- Don't Leave Valuables in Plain View. Don't make your car a more desirable target and attract thieves by leaving valuables in plain sight.
- When Parking in a Garage, Lock the Garage Door and Your Vehicle. By locking both the garage and vehicle doors, the chances of deterring a thief greatly improve.
- Don't Leave the Registration or Title in Your Car. A car thief will use these to sell your stolen car. File the title at your home or office, and carry registration in your purse or wallet.
- Vehicle Identification Number (VIN). Stolen cars/parts are more easily traced when vehicle VIN numbers have been etched on car windows and major parts. IDstickers (<http://www.IDsticker.com>) include VINs and can assist police in identifying your vehicle in the event that it is stolen.
- Alarms. Loud warnings sound when doors/hood/trunk are opened. Optional sensors include glass breakage, motion, tampering and towing. Panic buttons, back-up batteries, flashing parking lights or headlights, and automatic engine disable features are also recommended.

Auto Theft 2002

